An Abstract of a Thesis by
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The problem. In contemporary American fiction it was noted that religion frequently appeared as a topic of debate. In some novels a major theme was a debate over whether to accept, change, or reject organized religion.

Procedure. Several contemporary novels relating to this theme were read. Then novels of the past, more accepting era of religion, were studied. In contrasting these positions a study was made of literature written on this subject. Various reasons for the change in treatment of religion were investigated.

Findings. It was found that an increase in technical and philisophical knowledge made unquestioning acceptance of religion difficult. Three major positions were found in the novels discussed in this paper. Some authors could come to no conclusion but did see difficulties in accepting religion the way it is. Others felt that inconsistencies should be ignored. Humanism was proposed as a more relevant substitution for religion in today's world.

Conclusions. No one answer was found to this dilemma. But all authors seemed to agree that established religion as it has been known was difficult to accept in an uncritical manner. They did agree that man does need some form of inspiration for his life, whether it be established religion or humanism.

CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN AUTHORS' QUESTIONING OF RELIGION

A Thesis

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Introduction

A major trend in contemporary American novels involves a movement away from orthodox religion as it has been treated in our literary past. In early American literature God's existence and authority were not questioned. As Fuller states in Man in Modern Fiction: "With exceptions so rare as to be noteworthy, always representing some highly special phenomenon, the vast body of literature from the Hebrews and Homer down to the early part of the present century, has been based upon the tacit or declared premise that there is a God."[1] Frederick Hoffman makes a similar statement in The Imagination's New Beginning: "In the early decades of our century, the discussion of literature and religion were largely supported by the assumption that although there were crises, traditional Christianity had held firm."[2] Earlier critics rarely if ever suggested that Christianity was threatened; they were mainly satisfied to note deviations from its pure center.

This era of unquestioned belief and security in God ended with the advance of science and technology and philosophy. According to Hoffman it "began with Cartesian

[1]Edmund Fuller, Man in Modern Fiction (New York:Random House, 1949), p. 7.

[2]Frederick Hoffman, The Imagination's New Beginning, (Notre Dame:University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), p. 1.

speculations which depended fundamentally upon a mathematical descriptions of certitudes and a willingness to forego skepticism concerning God's role in the management of the universal machine.... Metaphysics gave way to the strategies of epistemology and to the creation and the maintenance of secular and formal worlds."[1] It seems to many that the more man studies and researches, the more he shatters sources for hope and meaning.

This change in religious attitude is closely related to and evolves from an increase in knowledge and technology. As man has learned more about how and why things exist, they lose their mystery. Darwin's theory of evolution, plus geological finds and space explorations, have all brought the intangible within reach. This increased knowledge seems to result in reduced religious faith. Two novels, one written in the 1890's, the other in the 1950's illustrate the conflict that has arisen between knowledge and faith.

Walter Miller's A Canticle for Leibowitz is placed in a hypothetical future after the world we know has been destroyed by atomic warfare. The survivors of this war blame it on knowledge and seek to destroy all traces of knowledge and the men they feel are responsible for it. During this purge many men flee to monasteries for refuge. One of these, a scientist named Leibowitz, becomes known as the

[1]Hoffman, pp. 1-2.

patron saint of a monastery where most of the books and papers that survived are concentrated. The Church becomes the haven for the forces that helped destroy the civilized world--an ironic twist of fate.

One of the monks at this monastery, Brother Kornhoer, begins studying some of the books and blueprints and finally learns how to build a generator. Then a debate begins between the monks as to whether or not this revival of knowledge is wise. Dom Paulo (chief abbot) has conservative but optimistic plans regarding the revival of learning. "And this time,...we'll keep them reminded of who kept the spark burning while the world slept."[1] He is hoping that this time increased knowledge will not mean a decreased interest and belief in God. However, a hermit warns the abbot what will happen: "They will soak up everything you can offer, take your job away from you, and then denounce you as a decrepit wreck. Finally they'll ignore you entirely." (p. 144) Explaining that this is the church's fault, the hermit insinuates that the church would be better to keep its monopoly of books locked safely away behind the doors of the monastery.

Thon Taddeo, the brother of a ruler in another area, comes to study the Memorabilia bringing his brother's

[1]Walter M. Miller, Jr., A Canticle for Leibowitz (Philadelphia:J. B. Lippincott Co., 1959), p. 120. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

soldiers who study the monastery as a potential citadel. Appearing resentful of the monopoly the monastery has on knowledge, he points out how much could have been learned by now if only the right men had access to this information. He predicts that there will be a struggle between the forces of knowledge and ignorance before man can progress to the level of civilization which once existed. Dom Paulo is worried about the future Thon predicts. "But you promise to begin restoring man's control over Nature. But who will govern the use of the power to control natural forces? Who will use it? To what end? How will you hold him in check?" (p. 183) Thon replies that the abbot wants to hide science and progress from the world until "the day when Man is good and pure and holy and wise.... If you try to save wisdom until the world is wise, Father, the world will never have it." (p. 185) Miller seems to feel that man will never be wise enough to handle knowledge properly. He notes in his novel: "The closer men came to perfecting for themselves a paradise, the more impatient they seemed to become with it, and with themselves as well. They made a garden of pleasure, and became progressively more miserable...rankled for a world no longer willing to believe or yearn. Well, they were going to destroy it again, were they...this garden Earth, civilized and knowing, to be torn apart again that Man might hope again in wretched darkness." (p. 235) This lack of faith is borne out in the last section of the novel. Once again man obtains

knowledge and uses it to destroy the world. All that survives is a simple, primitive, two-headed creature named Rachel. The intelligent segment of her dies and her child-like head takes over. This cycle presented by Miller is one we see in civilization's history. From the golden age of Greece and Rome, man descended into the Dark Ages where knowledge was preserved only in the monasteries. Other bright moments in civilization existed, such as the Egyptians, Chinese, etc. Today's state of advancement is threatened by such things as the atomic bomb and pollution--destructive tools created by our knowledge.

Knowledge is also presented as a destructive force in Harold Fredric's The Damnation of Theron Ware. Theron is introduced as a very dedicated and religious young preacher who is successful in his parish until exposed to a more intellectual and sophisticated world. The primary force contributing to this change (in addition to Theron's own pride), is the beautiful, red-headed, Irish-Catholic Celia Madden. Theron is attracted by her beauty and sophistication. She is almost the exact opposite of his very plain and practical wife and the type of woman he has been used to in the Methodist church. Extremely flattered by her attention, he soon begins to aspire to her "class" of society. She introduces Theron to Father Forbes and Dr. Ledsmar, who impress Theron with his own lack of knowledge. Skepticism and symbolism become new words in his vocabulary. As he reads under their direction, he

loses his unquestioning faith in God and his sincerity and integrity as a man.

Michael, Celia's brother, warns Theron of the undesirable change that is taking place. "As I say, I liked you. It was your face, and what I thought it showed of the man underneath it....The very sight of it makes one believe in pure thoughts and merciful deeds....Only half a year has gone by, and you have another face on you entirely....If it seemed to me like the face of a saint before, it is more like the face of a barkeeper now!"[1] Thereon has lost the respect of both the Methodist and Catholic factions of his town. He cannot communicate with or love his wife, but he is also unsuccessful in becoming romantically involved with Celia. No longer does he fit into either world.

Sister Soulsby, hired to raise money for the church, takes Theron in hand and teaches him many tricks of the trade. She also reveals that she does not have an unquestioning faith in God or established religion: "You were talking very loudly here about frauds and hypocracies and so on, a few minutes ago. Now I say that Soulsby and I do good, and that we're good fellows....Now I say that I call that real piety, if you like." (p. 181) She

[1]Harold Fredric, The Damnation of Theron Ware (New York:Hold, Rinehart & Winston, Inc., 1958), pp. 330-332. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

explains to Theron that established religion, whether Catholic or Methodist, has necessary structure and hypocrasies. However, since the final and ultimate purpose is to give help and inspiration to those seeking it, lack of purity in purpose and belief can be overlooked.

It is interesting to note that Frederic appears to be most in sympathy with Sister Soulsby's and Father Forbes' attitude toward religion. Both have doubts regarding the existence of God and the doctrine of their churches. Both also believe that the work they are doing is of benefit to those they help. Thus their religion has evolved into one of humanism with mankind's betterment as its primary goal.

Father Forbes and Celia were able to handle the acquisition of knowledge without losing their own identity and integrity, but they do lose their faith. Theron wants to shed his own identity and adopt that of his new friends. Frederic, in his characterization of Theron, appears to be saying that religious faith and education are incompatible. One necessarily excludes the other. Both have value and can bring satisfaction, but one person cannot have both. This is the basic question handled in the body of this paper. As man learns more about his world and himself, what place must or should religion take in this new viewpoint? The remainder of this paper is a study of contemporary authors' dilemma on whether to accept religion with some modifications or reject it entirely.

Uncertainty

Several contemporary authors have not decided whether to accept religion as it is, or with minor modifications, or to reject it entirely. As mentioned in the introduction, their educational level makes it difficult to be unquestioning believers while rejection of religion leaves a large void. This section will explore their thoughts on possible alternatives.

Sinclair Lewis's Elmer Gantry explores this problem in depth. His novel treats almost all types of religious leaders with varied motives. In his development Lewis seems to be chiding the hypocrasies of religion, but not disputing its existence as a social institution. Judson Roberts, the evangelist who is instrumental in Elmer's conversion, rationalizes religion as not so bad. "No, really, it wasn't so bad for him, that Elmer what's-his-name, to get converted. Suppose there isn't anything to it. 'Won't hurt him to cut out some of his bad habits for a while, anyway. And how do we know? Maybe the Holy Ghost does come down. No more improbable than electricity. I do wish I could be honest."[1]

[1]Sinclair Lewis, Elmer Gantry (New York:The New American Library, Inc., 1970), p. 65. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

Elmer Gantry's motives are questioned by the reader almost from the start. When he is asked to speak at a YMCA prayer meeting, he thinks "No! Here Prexy had said he was the whole cheese: gotten up a big meeting for him ....Suppose it got into the newspapers!....Where could they find a guy that could start in and save souls right off the bat?" (p. 59) Elmer discovers almost immediately that religion can be the path to a position of respect and envy. Later when he chooses ministry as his profession, Elmer thinks "Where could he find a profession with a better social position than the ministry--thousands listening to him--invited to banquets and everything..." (p. 67) Lewis develops Gantry as an opportunist who has discovered that the ministry can have many material and social rewards.

An intelligent and enthusiastic person, Elmer throws himself into his work. There are times of inspiration, especially with Sharon Farrell, when he really does believe in what he is doing. But, generally he is a detached and calculated performer after specific results. He knows his subject well and is successful. At times Gantry becomes bored with his pious life and sneaks off to smoke, drink, cuss, or enjoy women. After these relaxing and refreshing episodes, he returns with renewed fire to condemn these same vices.

Though Elmer uses these same techniques as a farm implement salesman and conducting prosperity classes, these

vocations do not give him the financial and ego-satisfying success of the ministry. Elmer wants to be a "big man" in the religious world. He rationalizes his behavior in much the same way as do the Soulsbys in the Damnation of Theron Ware. Both admit they are calculating opportunists; but they argue that they also accomplish much in uplifting the souls and morals of their converts.

Lewis presents Sharon Farrell as another opportunist in the religious world. She, like Elmer, is an expert in her field and is a source of inspiration to her followers. In her white gown she becomes a very convincing performer. Off-stage she is very human, practical and materialistic. She runs her show like a businessman. Unlike, Elmer, however, Sharon is eventually a believer in her own powers. This brings her peace and happiness but also brings her death in a tragic fire in her tabernacle.

Sharon does revert at times to dancing, drinking, or making love with Elmer. These moments for her, like Elmer, are a relaxation and a break from the pressure of her position. She shows Elmer her private chapel with its heathen idols and admits she is not from an old Southern family. With the proceeds from her evangelistic endeavors she has bought a position and past to feed her ego. Her ego is further fed when Elmer convinces her to add faith healing to her services. Eventually she believes in her own talents and infallability. In her final moment of glory in her burning tabernacle, Sharon dies trying to prove her power.

In contrast, Lewis uses Jim Leffert, Elmer's roommate at Terwillinger College, to explore atheism. Jim is well-read and thinks issues through. Unable to accept Biblical stories at face value, he starts asking questions that cannot be answered. "Jim was less bored by college. He had a relish for the flavor of scholarship. He liked to know things about people dead these thousand years, and he liked doing canned miracles in chemistry." (p. 12) Scholarship again seems to preclude religious fanatacism in this character. Jim keeps Elmer from becoming religious for quite a while. Elmer, however, fears Jim a little because Elmer really does believe there is something to religion. When Elmer is finally converted, Jim moves out, not being able to see Elmer as a "spiritual leader."

Varied views toward a career in the ministry are presented in the comments of the seminary students at Mizpah. One of these, Harry Zenz, also embraces atheism and approaches religion from a practical position. "I'm not ambitious, I don't want money enough to hustle for it. I like to sit and read. I like intellectual acrobatics and no work. And you can have all that in the ministry." (p. 89) Another student claims the church's purpose is to add beauty to the barren lives of the common people." (p. 90)

One of the most zealous of the students, Eddie Fislinger, is visited by Elmer several years after they have both left Mizpah. By then Eddie is established in

his own drab parish married to an uninteresting woman with two bland children. Lewis describes the change that has occurred. "Already Eddie had lost such devout fires as he had once shown in the YMCA: Already he was old, settled down, without conceivable adventure, waiting for death." (p. 155) This once very devout student is settled into the drudgeries of life and is probably of little inspiration to anyone. Gantry's detachment at least seems to allow for a greater zest for life than Eddie's total involvement.

Eddie's antithesis at Mizpah is Frank Shallard, who is always full of doubts. His questioning of the virgin birth almost costs him his ordination. When established in a parish, he becomes friends with Andrew Pengilly, the Methodist preacher in town. Pengilly is a very devout man who does not worry about theological arguments. He answers Frank's doubts with the question: "When do you feel nearest to God? When you're reading some awful' smart book criticizing the Bible or when you kneel in prayer and your spirit just flows forth and you <u>know</u> that you're in communion with him?" (p. 237) Frank follows his lead, becomes a more powerful preacher, marries, and moves on to larger pastorates. In Eureka he becomes involved with a group of young liberal ministers whose religious doubts again have him confused. "He who each Sunday morning neatly points his congregation the way to Heaven was himself tossed in a purgatory of self-despising doubt, where

his every domestic virtue was cowardice, his every mystic aspiration a superstitious mockery and his every desire to be honest a cruelty which he must spare Bess and his well-loved brood." (p. 241) Finally Frank leaves the Baptist church as he is about to be kicked out and enlists as a private soldier in the Army. For three years he ignores his position as a preacher and becomes one of the men and learns to hate it. He returns home and joins the Congregationalists. He still doubts he is doing any good, "aside from providing the drug of religious hope to timorous folk frightened of hell-fire and afraid to walk alone." (p. 319) But he is happy to be home with Bess and his children.

Before long, Frank again questions his faith. In a discussion with a good friend, Phillip McGarry, he asks what constructive or original ideas Jesus ever had. He pictures Jesus as an egotistical, impractical, and irresponsible person. Frank clings to his church only to help his fellow man. When asked why he does not leave the ministry, he explains what religion means to him.

"Though I do think our present churches are as absurd as a belief in witchcraft, yet I believe there could be a church free of superstition, helpful to the needy, and giving people that mystic something stronger than reason, that sense of being uplifted in common worship of an unknowable power for good. Myself, I'd be lonely with nothing but bleak debating societies. I think--at least

I still think--that for many souls there is this need of worship, even of beautiful ceremonial..." (p. 367) Frank even seriously considers joining a Charity Organization Society, which at first he likes no better. When he receives his first assignment to speak to the Zenith Charity Organization Society he is excited and enthused: "Bully! Fighting again! I've found that religion I've been looking for." (p. 375) At the hotel he finds a note threatening him if he speaks, and receives a threatening phone call. The note represents the worst in Christian wrath: "We don't want you and your hellish atheism here. We can think for ourselves without any imported 'liberals'. If you enjoy life, you'd better be out of this decent Christian city before evening. God help you if you aren't! We have enough mercy to give warning, but enough of God's justice to see you get yours right if you don't listen. Blasphemers get what they ask for. We wonder if you would like the feeling of a black snake across your lying face? The Committee." (p. 375) The meeting is broken up by "The Committee" and Frank is taken to the country and whipped severely. He loses his eyesight in addition to other facial and body wounds. When seeking help, he cries out "Oh, God, won't anybody help me?" (p. 379) and then notes he has called on God which perhaps proves he's a good Christian. Lewis considers the possibility of religion's use as an opium in this characterization of Frank, but as we can see, it is not a completely satisfactory solution.

Through all of these people who have chosen the ministry as a career, Lewis investigates varied attitudes toward religion's value and its place in man's life. Elmer Gantry and Sharon Farrell both see it as a pleasant, profitable, and ego-satisfying way to make a living. When Sharon actually begins believing in herself, she loses her objectivity. Foolishly she dies and encourages others to die waiting for God to save them in the burning tabernacle. The always practical Elmer saves himself. Lewis does not seem to think God should be taken too seriously. Eddie sees religion as a total involvement of oneself in God and his ministry and is ineffective in his church. While Frank needs some sort of spiritual void in his life filled, he also has to be able to accept it intellectually. The novel leads to the conclusion that total, blind belief is not healthy intellectually, though it can fill many inner needs and give a kind of security. On the other hand, total detachment leaves many voids and leads to cynicism. Lewis seems perhaps most sympathetic with Frank Shallard who can see both sides and does not know what to do.

John Updike explores these same quandries in Rabbit Run. Harry Angstrom is a highschool basketball star caught up in the inanities of day-to-day living. He sees his marriage as a hopeless and dreary situation and decides to run. After driving all night, he ends up back where he started in his home town area. Harry is seeking some kind

of meaning, peace and hope for his life. At first the sun of the ocean beaches of Florida promises hope as Harry flees from his wife in an all night drive which ends close to home territory. Tothero takes him in at this point, giving Harry a place to stay and introducing him to Ruth. Harry quickly learns Tothero, too, has problems and does not want Harry to stay with him for long. So Harry moves in with Ruth. At first he thinks he has found a solution, but even this arrangement eventually collapses.

When first entering Ruth's room, Harry notices the church across the street with its lights still burning--"a hole punched in reality to show the abstract brilliance burning underneath."[1] Lying in bed with Ruth, he keeps noticing the stained glass church window across the street. "Its childish brightness seems the one kind of comfort left to him." (p. 74) Actually it provides both comfort and guilt feelings. Harry and Ruth discuss religion briefly. Ruth admits she does not believe in anything. But Harry insists that man must believe in something and therefore he believes in God. He feels God is the reason for anything existing. David Galloway in The Absurd Hero in American Fiction has commented on Harry's belief: "Rabbit is not a Christian saint precisely because Christianity is one of the unsuccessful environments which fail him and

[1]John Updike, Rabbit Run (New York:Fawcett World Library, 1960), p. 69. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

which he must reject--he is attracted to the church but only so long as it promises to fulfill his needs."[1]

Harry responds to the Reverend Mr. Eccles' overtures, hoping the minister does have the answer for his messed-up life. He plays golf with him and goes to his home. When Janet is in labor with their child, Eccles gives Harry the news and encourages Harry to stay in his home rather than go back to Ruth. He talks with the families involved and tries to soothe things over. When their marriage fails again, Janet begins drinking and kills the child. Harry once more feels lost and trapped. Everyone blames him for the death. At the funeral he seeks comfort in the service. The minister quotes "The Lord is my shepherd; therefore can I lack nothing." (p. 243) Ironically, Harry, while trying to believe, still lacks everything in his marriage and life. The others at the funeral place the blame on him. He sees this, knows it is not true, and runs. The church has failed for any appreciable amount of time to give Harry comfort.

Updike explores the ministerial role in religion through the character, the Reverend Mr. Eccles. As minister of the Episcopal church, he is a more liberal religious leader than his peer, Reverend Kruppenbach of the Luthern church. Eccles feels he should be personally involved in helping parishoners who are in trouble. He has a history of bringing many of these, including Harry, to

[1]David D. Galloway, The Absurd Hero in American Fiction (Austin:University of Texas Press, 1966), p. 26.

his home to stay for short periods of time. His children know them by their problems, such as the Silly Man, Droopsy Lady, and Happy Beans. Harry is known as the Naughty Man. Eccles attempts to establish a rapport by playing golf with Harry; then when they are friends he urges him to return to his wife. His efforts are concentrated on physically uniting the couple rather than solving their problems first. He uses his influence in this situation more as a friend than as a minister.

Eccles own wife is a non-believer. They married on the basis that she would keep her mind open for a state of grace. However, even living with a minister this long, Lucy has not changed. She sees little value for herself in religion. Eccles himself sometimes wonders about the value of what he expounds.

"He seems to hear that she is going to call the police to arrest him. Why not? With his white collar he forges God's name on every word he speaks. He steals belief from the children he is supposed to be teaching. He murders faith in the minds of any who really listen to his babble. He commits fraud with every schooled cadence of the service, mouthing Our Father when his heart knows the real father he is trying to please, has been trying to please all his life." (pp. 129-130) In Eccles' self-analysis here, Updike reveals that perhaps his real motivation in becoming a minister was not feeling the call of God, but trying to please his father. We learn here

also perhaps why Eccles fulfills his duties in a more socially rather than religiously oriented way, as Reverend Kruppenbach accuses him. The Luthern minister accuses him of being "an unpaid doctor, to run around and plug up the holes and make everything smooth." (p. 78)

Counseling Rabbit and his family turns out to be an unsuccessful venture for Eccles. Though arguing that Rabbit should go back to Janet because she is expecting a baby, Eccles never gets into the problems that caused him to leave. Because these difficulties are ignored, Rabbit walks out, Janet gets drunk and the baby drowns. Rabbit, at the funeral, realizes he is in the same hopeless trap where all the blame is put on him. So he runs to Ruth. Ruth is pregnant and has considered abortion, but cannot go through with it. She wants Harry to divorce Janet and marry her. If he won't do this, she does not want to see him. Harry leaves, debates between Ruth and Janet, and runs.

Updike notes that Eccles' liberated style of ministry has failed to help Rabbit. Nor has Reverend Kruppenbach's more distant, but inspirational style been of any help or comfort. Ruth's atheism offers no hope for either her or Rabbit. From this we can conclude that Updike has found no solution for the religious dilemma that troubles the characters in this novel and mankind today.

In Lie Down in Darkness, William Styron presents another Episcopal minister coping with his religious role.

There are many similarities between Carey Carr and Eccles from Rabbit Run. Both men try to counsel their parishoners on non-religious matters and both have wives somewhat skeptical of their husbands' profession. Adrienne, for example, states she does not blame Milton for his extra-marital affair with Dolly because his wife is a "nest of little hatreds." Eccles wife, Lucy, is somewhat suggestive sexually in her behavior toward Rabbit.

Helen comes to Carey for "little talks" about her problems. These conversations are therapeutic for her in that she can at least confess her problems and hatreds to someone. Carey listens and conducts philosophical discussions with Helen which make them both feel better momentarily. Carey can see that she needs psychiatric care but he will not admit it, hoping he can help her. So he continues reading Plato and hearing how Helen hates her daughter and husband.

During one discussion early in their relationship, he starts to tell Helen that "All she had needed to do at certain times was to have a little charity, and at least measure the results."[1] But Helen rejects this analysis, not being able to accept the idea that she might be wrong. Meantime Carey backs down.

"Poor woman. It was a funny circumstance. In a day when a minister felt perpetually deserted, when the one

[1]William Styron, Lie Down in Darkness (New York:The New York American Library, Inc., 1951), p. 119.

thing one wanted most was to be able to offer spiritual guidance, here was a person who seemed to be in great need of whatever help he could give and what could he say? Nothing really." (p. 119-120) Carey finds himself unable to help Helen with his platitudes. He can pacify for moments at a time, but he cannot help her with her problems. Some doubts exist in Carey's own mind regarding the value of his religion. He has never been able to attain a complete vision of God and this bothers him. Like Eccles he concentrates more on uniting Helen and Milton, rather than solving the problems causing the separation.

Helen finds more comfort in Carey's companionship than in her belief in God. Raised in a strict Army family, she was taught very definite ideas about sin and God. This results in a rigid moral and social set of vaules, which causes her problems all her life. In an argument with Milton regarding Dolly, she states several times "I love my God." (p. 89) Helen also affirms "I know what sin is.... In knowing that I'll always be superior to you..." (p. 89) She seeks comfort from God as she tells Carey she has been on her knees begging God to teach her to love. However, that spell is broken when she again hears Peyton's voice. One moment Helen is taking her daughters to church and the next wondering why she has ever sought out Carey's help. In her dreams Helen sees Carey as an enemy - one of the Men. She sees him threatening her with a stick saying, "You must believe! You must believe! I am the way, the

truth and the life!" (p. 285) She accuses him of being a hypocrite all these years pretending to understand her problems. In desperation and frustration she screams "Your God is a silly old ass,...and my God is the devil!" (p. 286)

Helen spends her life in misery because of the rigid standards she has set for herself, her husband and her children. Religion is her usual excuse or reason for this rigid behavior. She hides from the realities of her own inadequacies behind religion. Belief in God brings no comfort or love for her. It is merely another requirement of her "position."

Milton does not share his wife's religious beliefs. He prefers to spend his Sunday morning leisure hours at home rather than in church. Hearing part of a church service on his radio, Milton recalls his picture of a Methodist church: "a row of maple chairs, young women with bad breath and half-moons of sweat beneath their armpits, a basement somewhere smelling of stale leaking water and moldy religion. A sad shadowy place,..." (p. 51) He notes that the Methodists hate beauty. They seem to concentrate on the evil and ugly of religion. Though Milton ignores religion, his life is no more satisfactory than Helen's.

As uncertain in her religious beliefs as in her family relationships, the daughter, Peyton does not know where to turn. Her father treats her too much like the wife and companion he wishes Helen to be. Sensing this substitution, Helen vents her jealousy and hate for Peyton. Small

incidents like the time Peyton ties Maude up and lets her fall downstairs increase the hate Helen has for her daughter. Peyton knows this and tries to cope with it. When she comes home from college for the Christmas holidays, a major blow up between mother and daughter occurs and Peyton leaves crying. She does not return except for her wedding, which also ends disastrously with her mother angry and Milton again treating her more like a lover than daughter. She seeks happiness and escape in her marriage to Harry. However, she ruins the relationship by sleeping with other men. Each time it is for some small wrong she feels Harry has done.

At the point of her final desperation after Harry has left, Peyton contemplates death hoping this will cleanse her soul. She tries to pray but cannot "tell what or who I was praying to. I said there is no God. God is a gaseous vertebrate and how could I pray to something that looks like a jellyfish?" (p. 342) She thinks of Milton and tries to gain courage from these memories, but returns to her praying, asking God to make her pure and give her Harry back. Later, drunk and still looking for Harry, she cries "How long, Lord, wilt Though hide Thyself forever?" (p. 345) She prays not to Christ, but the part of her that was pure and is now lost. Again later in Styron's narrative of her final desperation, Peyton wonders if she's cut off from God forever due to the evil of past generations. She wants to be full of love, not sorrow, but she does not

think God is listening to her. He is probably listening to the sparrow instead. Peyton feels she is guilty and shameful because this is her mother's concept of her. In trying to escape this image, she subconsciously verifies it. She fights the same sin and evil side of religion that her mother has been unable to cope with. Overcome by feelings of shame, she is unable to obtain any help or comfort from God. Her only hope for love and comfort is Milton and she cannot go back home because of Helen. In ultimate loneliness and frustration she kills herself, hoping that whatever life comes after death will be better.

Unlike the Loftis family, who find little comfort in their religion, the black servants, LaRuth and Ella find hope in God. They are followers of Daddy Faith, who teaches a very emotional form of religion. He expounds love and peace along with hellfire and brimstone. He teaches LaRuth to handle her own grief by treating it as God's will. "Daddy Faith, he say grief is a wellspring and a fount, dat when it run dry den it's time to lift up you' heart and praise Him fo' thanksgivin'..." (p. 372) On the way to the baptism the busload of Negroes sing "Happy am I in my Redeemer." This line is repeated frequently by them. The raft or stage for Daddy Faith is painted with the word LOVE. During the service, Ella shouts out that Daddy Faith (not God) is their King of Glory. They all shout that he loves and comforts them. His sermon emphasizes that God will relieve their oppression and give them comfort. All the

Negroes find solace and return home ready to face life.

Styron presents Daddy Faith as a very powerful personality. His large frame, jeweled hands, and white robe present a commanding appearance. We are also told about the Cadillac he drives and are led to believe that he has done well financially in his ministry. He retains his humor, acting almost more like an uncle or daddy talking to his children. Like Sharon in Elmer Gantry, he knows how to create a powerful effect. Styron stresses his financial well-being to remind us that Daddy Faith is a charlatan, but a very successful one. The comfort he gives is genuine, yet like the Soulsbys, he accomplishes much more than Carey Carr who tries to be sincere.

It is interesting to note that while this more opium form of belief as presented by Daddy Faith is successful, it is also accepted by the oppressed, poor, and uneducated blacks. When LaRuth tries to relay this belief and hope to Helen, she is unsuccessful. With their education and exposure the Loftis family cannot blindly accept God. As mentioned in the introduction, blind faith does not seem to be compatible with knowledge. Styron appears to wish they could coexist, but has little hope for it. Beyond this he has no answers for what religion can do for modern man. In this position he is joined by Lewis and Updike, who also have no clear-cut answers. All face the problem created by an increase in technology and knowledge. Elmer Gantry returns to the business world briefly to sell farm implements.

Rabbit sells magi-peelers, while Peyton and Milton worry about the Bomb. Elmer and Rabbit find something lacking in the business world--a warmth and purpose. They need some sort of religious inspiration beyond this to face life's problems. Peyton and Milton can find no comfort in either religion or atheism. There seems to be no hope in technology--only tools for destruction. These authors agree there is a dilemma but have no answers.

Religion as an Opium

An escape from doubts and life's harsh realities through religion is explored by some contemporary authors. They have reacted to today's problems with feelings of helplessness and hopelessness and feel an opium is necessary to combat this. As Mr. Frazer states in Hemingway's "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio," Religion is the opium of the people....Why should the people be operated on without an anesthetic?"[1] Hemingway indicates that revolution and education are cathartic but destroy man. Therefore an opium is necessary to dull the pain of the world.

The authors who view religion as a necessary opium also agree that the world is a painful place. They seem to agree that the general state of things is undesirable, and they are pessimistic about any future hope or change. Richard Kim, in The Martyred, presents the chaotic world of the Korean War. The United Nations forces are occupying Pyongyang in North Korea when the novel begins. The Communists have been pushed north, almost into China. Lee, the narrator, is assigned to an intelligence unit with primarily political duties. Propaganda to raise the morale of the Christians is his primary goal. The people have seen

[1]Ernest Hemingway, "The Gambler, the Nun, and the Radio," in The Snows of Kilmanjaro and Other Stories (New York:Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), pp. 53 & 54.

occupation, the Christians did not resist. Fourteen of them were arrested with all but two killed. Situations such as this kidnapping, terrorized the Christians so that there was no fight left in them.

One of the local ministers, Chaplain Koh, was serving as an undercover agent for army intelligence. When the Communists discovered what he was doing, Colonel Chang had Koh and four members of his congregation removed from Pyongyang. One of the four was an informer. All four are caught and killed by the Communists. Chaplain Koh's church thinks he has betrayed the four and his church by running. He has not told them the truth--what his job was and who the informer was--because he wants to spare the feelings of the boy's father.

The people in Pyongyang are very discouraged by the war. Lee finds them digging bodies and possessions out of the rubble when he first arrives in the city. They do not even care enough to do something about the bell hanging loosely in the church tower or to stop Hann from entering the dilapidated church. The old man Lee talks to "paid me no mind, and when I left he was on his knees in the dirty snow."[1] These people have been through so much, they do not care any more. The soldiers flee Pyongyang as the Chinese

[1]Richard Kim, The Martyred (New York:George Braziller, 1964), p. 26. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

and North Koreans surge southward. Once again these people see war in their city and occupation by the Communists. All they can see for their future is war and occupation.

This same atmosphere of pessimism in addition to cynicism pervades Kurt Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle. When Lionel Boyd Johnson and Corporal McCabe are washed up on the shores of San Lorenzo, they find a people with nothing but diseases. The citizens' condition is described in Bokonon's Calypso:

> "Oh, a very sorry people, yes,
> Did I find here.
> Oh, they had no music,
> And they had no beer.
> And, oh, everywhere
> Where they tried to perch
> Belonged to Castle Sugar, Incorporated,
> Or the Catholic church."[1]

There was virtually no government but the sugar company. The company's plantation bosses bribed big natives to kill, wound, or torture the people to keep them in line. Priests and the San Lorenzo Cathedral were provided to administer to the people's spiritual needs.

All of those who had previously occupied the island, gave it up with no struggle. Following their lead, Castle Sugar also left, when Johnson and McCabe announced they were going to conquer San Lorenzo. These new conquerors decided to create a utopia. They changed the laws, tried to

[1]Kurt Vonnegut, Cat's Cradle (New York:Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1963), pp. 87-88. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

improve the economy and created a new religion. Soon it became apparent that nothing was going to help the economic situation; San Lorenzo simply did not have any resources. It was as unproductive as an equal area in the Sahara or Polar Icecap. In addition to this problem there were 450 inhabitants for each uninhabitable square mile. Once when McCabe and Johnson tried to divide the total yearly income of the country among its adults, it was computed that each share was only six to seven dollars. So religion became the only source of hope. "Truth was the enemy of the people, because the truth was so terrible, so Bokonon made it his business to provide the people with better and better lies." (p. 118)

James Baldwin creates this same hopeless atmosphere in Go Tell It on the Mountain, which probes the miseries of black people in a white country. The misery begins in the cabin of Gabriel and Florence's mother. She had been a slave in her early years, had her children taken from her, and had seen her second husband desert her. Through it all she is religious, but bitter toward the white man who has enslaved her people. She claims her superiority to her white masters via her religion and its guarantee for the next world. Florence's friend and Gabriel's first wife, Deborah, was raped by white men. After that the black men looked at her only with lust, but no respect or thoughts of marriage.

John finds similar misery in the Harlem ghetto. He sees his world as the dust-filled apartment of his parents. His future waits for him in the ghetto. "There awaited him, one day, a house like his father's house and a church like his father's, and a job like his father's where he would grow old and black with hunger and toil."[1] When wandering down Fifth Avenue, John contemplates entering a shop or an apartment building, but does not dare--today or ever.

Florence leaves her home in the South to strive for something better. A pretty girl, she spurns the young men because she does not want to end up in a cabin like her mother's. Instead she heads North for New York City and what she hopes will be a better life. Florence marries Frank, a no-good young man, who eventually leaves her and is killed in the war in France. She ends up poor and alone--the plight she has fled from.

Elizabeth, too, flees her home and her too religious aunt to go to New York with her boyfriend, Richard. Richard never gets around to marrying her, though she does end up pregnant. He finds himself unable to get ahead in work, arrested falsely, and finally, unable to handle it all, he

[1]James Baldwin, Go Tell It on the Mountain (New York: Random House, 1965), p. 34. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

kills himself in desperation. Elizabeth is left alone with shattered dreams and a bastard child to rear.

Each of Baldwin's characters strikes out to escape their miserable existence. They see the white man, the South, and their religion as forces that hold them back from "the good life." None of them can escape the facts of their miserable and hopeless existence.

Since the Koreans in The Martyred cannot escape from their misfortunes, they have to find a way to ignore and thereby live with them. Christianity becomes their opium. Captain Chang is very aware of how important religion is to these people and utilizes it for the army's benefit. He assigns Lee to develop the story on the martyred ministers, knowing it will be good for the morale of the Koreans.

Shin, one of the surviving ministers, remains in seclusion "guarding the truth." He tells the people very little about what happened because he says they cannot handle the truth. When told by a prisoner who witnessed the execution, the ministers refuse to believe the truth. They wait for Shin to tell them what they want to hear. Shin knows that telling the true story about twelve ministers denying God in their last moments, would endanger the remaining ministers' faith in God. It would also tend to demoralize further a people who desperately need some hope in their lives. These Christians prefer to believe that Shin and Hann betrayed the others. They are so convinced

they storm the house and come close to doing physical harm to Shin. They do beat Hann so severely that he dies.

Shin loves these people and decides to keep the truth from them. Instead he "confesses" to a betrayal and begs the forgiveness of his fellow pastors and Christians. Relieved by his protection of the martyrs' reputation, the ministers quickly forgive him. Shin aids in the ceremony commemorating the martyrs--using their deaths to give his people strength. When Lee condemns him for what he is doing, Shin asks for help. "Help me! Sufferings seize their hope and faith and toss them adrift into a sea of despair! We must show them light, tell them there will be a glorious welcome waiting for them, assure them they will triumph in the eternal Kingdom of God!" (p. 256)

Chaplain Koh also protects these people from the truth. He accepts the scorn of his congregation rather than reveal his espionage work and the fact that the deacon's son was an informer. Koh wants to be accepted by the Christians of Pyongyang as much as John wants to be accepted by the church in Go Tell It On the Mountain. He has seen the worst side of the war in his espionage and would prefer to forget it whenever possible in his church. He understands Shin protecting the people, because he tries to also. Unlike Shin, who does not believe, Koh is trying desperately to believe in God.

Captain Park also is having problems handling Christianity. He rejects it because he rejects his father's

self-righteous attitude. Christianity must allow for human error and weakness in order for Park to accept it. When he learns his father is among the martyred, Park wants most to know if he held firm until the end. Shin's letter explains the dying loss of faith of Park's father, and therefore makes it possible for the Captain to understand the church. He also understands that maybe God has a reason for all the misery and injustice in the world. Believing this at least gives life some meaning. "Do you understand that a fairy tale can be an integral part of our lives? Then it ceases to be a fairy tale. It becomes real. It becomes something that is meant to be. What those Christians wanted and needed was not merely a nice little story that would give them comfort and confidence, but something that would make their lives meaningful, something that would make their sufferings worthwhile." (p. 228) Captains Lee and Park and Mr. Shin all believe there is no God but religion is necessary. As Park states: "Deeper truth lies in the fact that the world is not meaningless and absurd but is in a meaningless state." (p. 229) All are skeptics, but perpetrate Christianity for the Koreans who need it.

Similar to The Martyred, a web of deceptions is spun in Vonnegut's Cat's Cradle. As mentioned earlier in this discussion, the truth is too terrible for the people in San Lorenzo. So Johnson asks McCabe to outlaw Bokononism to give it "More zest, more tang." (p. 110) The religion is based on lies as explained in the calypso:

"I wanted all things
To seem to make some sense,
So we all could be happy, yes,
Instead of tense.
And I made up lies
So that they all fit nice,
And I made this sad world
A par-a-dise." (p. 90)

Bokonon goes into hiding and the hook is invented as a punishment for Bokononists who are captured. McCabe organizes large manhunts, but "suprisingly" never catches Bokonon. The people remain entertained by the continuing drama and forget their miserable reality by participating in the charade.

All the islanders are Bokononists, including the president, Papa Monzano--though it is not openly admitted. Papa's adopted daughter, Mona, is the high priestess of this religion. Her perfect beauty and skill as a xylophone virtuoso make her another diversion for the natives. The "boko-maru" or touching of feet is the favorite form of communication between two Bokononists. Their souls meet through their soles--an interesting pun on words by Vonnegut. Even the well-educated on the island, such as Julian and Phillip Castle are Bokonists. It is a device for forgetting their misery. Julian admits he cannot face life without his aspirin and Bokononism--two painkillers.

Vonnegut presents Bokononism as a very successful opium which allows the people to forget their hopeless and miserable condition. The peace is marred by the introduction of ice-nine. Frank Hoenikker uses it as his key to

power in San Lorenzo. Papa Monzano believes "Science is the strongest thing there is." (p. 102) McCabe and Johnson had already admitted that even science could not help San Lorenzo and Bokononism is the answer. By seeking out science again, Papa is instrumental in destroying San Lorenzo.

In Cat's Cradle science is presented as a destructive force. Dr. Feliz Hoenikker as the inventor of the atomic bomb and ice-nine becomes a symbol for destructive science. As a man he was harmless enough and well-meaning, but his search for truth proved disastrous. In Cat's Cradle Vonnegut reflects attitudes expressed by Walter Miller and Harold Fredric in their novels (treated earlier in this work). All seem to feel that an increase in knowledge results in a destruction of man, both physically and spiritually.

Related to the destructive science theme is an almost anti-thinking theme pervading the novel. At the Research Laboratory, Miss Pefko announces that scientists think too much. Another woman agrees. "She hated people who thought too much. At that moment, she struck me as an appropriate representative for almost all mankind." (p. 31) The Bokononists are not encouraged to think. It is better to merely exist and play games. Vonnegut is questioning the values of a thinking society.

When ice-nine destroys the world, Bokonon is the one who tells the people what they should do. He tells them

that "God was surely trying to kill them, possibly because he was through with them and they should have the good manners to die." (p. 182) As Mona describes this solution--"It's all so simple, that's all. It solves so much for so many, so simply....Would you wish any of these alive again if you could?" (p. 183) Bokonon gives back the lies and therefore peace to the natives. Then Mona decides to die in Bokonon fashion because living is too miserable. The narrator, too, turns to Bokonon at the end to know how to die--thumbing his nose at "you-know-who."

While Bokononism is held out as the only comfort for the citizens of San Lorenzo, the church is presented as the haven for the Negro in James Baldwin's novel, Go Tell It on the Mountain. In previous discussion the plight of the Negro was presented in terms of Baldwin's characters. All had wanted or tried to escape their pasts but failed.

Gabriel spends his life running from the man he really is. Before his conversion he was known as a wild, irresponsible, usually drunk young man. Afterward he goes almost the opposite extreme in being very pious to compensate for his past. He marries Deborah, after the other ministers ridicule her, to do a kindness for her, and because he thinks it is the Lord's will. Though there is companionship between them, there is no passion. He backslides with Esther, a servant girl, and has a son he does not claim. Then he returns to his extremely pious position. During

his marriage to Elizabeth, Gabriel constantly throws her past in her face while ignoring his own errors. He hides behind his position as deacon in the church. Several times his sister Florence accuses him of being the same basically wicked man he always was. He ignores her accusations and continues his harsh ways toward his family. Religion becomes the opium he uses to hide from himself.

Deborah, too, hides behind religion. After she has been raped by the white men, she is rejected by all black men both because of what happened and because she is ugly. So she spends the rest of her life atoning for a sin that was not hers. Wearing grays and blacks, she cares for the sick and poor and becomes very active in the church. When Gabriel's mother dies, she looks after him. Reflecting her community's opinion, she has a very poor image of herself. Her only comfort is in the church and through the church and her devotion she marries Gabriel.

Shattered dreams and a bastard child leave Elizabeth in a helpless and hopeless position. Gabriel appears as her only way out. In marrying him she does, however, again embrace the church. She had rejected it earlier to be with Richard, and yet also not wanting him to be like Gabriel, Elizabeth serves as a buffer between John and his stepfather. She finds security and happiness in her children. In payment she accepts religion as the buffer between her and disaster. Still doing penance for her mistakes, Elizabeth does find comfort in the church. She is aware

that she is using religion to hide from life's realities, but sees no other way.

John, too, can find no other way. At first he rejects religion--especially because of Gabriel. He hates Gabriel and wishes to leave his father's way of life behind for the ways of white men. As mentioned earlier in this discussion, John is also alienated from the white world. Throughout his childhood John was told that people expected a lot from him. They wanted him to become a preacher like his father. At first he fights these expectations and hopes for another, better life. After his Saturday afternoon excursion into the other world, John realizes he does not belong there. By believing in his parent's religion, he can at least be accepted by the church members, Elisha, and maybe even Gabriel. His admiration for Elisha and the wish to be accepted by him, drive John to make the decision. When John is going through the conversion experience, it is Elisha who prays him through, while Gabriel wishes him to remain in sin. Afterward John is elated with his identity with the church and Elisha. When he returns home after service, he is afraid to leave the comfort of Elisha for the cold of his home. The church is now his only comfort and shelter from life's adversities.

Florence, too, seeks somewhat unwillingly the comfort of the church. She has tried leaving home and religion behind as John had contemplated. But her flight was futile. Now, because she knows she is dying, Florence goes back to

the church for the comfort she has been unable to find anywhere else. Like John, she seeks acceptance and comfort from the congregation. She is unable to find the solace John does. Too many years of skepticism have passed for her to change. She supports John and hopes he finds religion the painkiller for his life that he so badly needs.

Baldwin portrays the church as the haven for the frustrated, alienated Negro. Among his own people and with God, he can forget the pain of reality and lose himself in religious ecstacy. The highly emotional, demonstrative professions of belief are a vital part of the opium effect of the Negro religion.

The authors discussed above see religion as an answer to life's harsh reality. They seem to agree that when the situation is hopeless, forget it via some consuming religion that holds dominance over mind and body. Man needs hope to keep going. After ice-nine has destroyed San Lorenzo, both the narrator and Newt note they have no sexual desires or urges. Any thought of procreation is revolting at this point. They do not want life to go on. Bokonon has ended his book, as he, too, feels life had ended.

To prevent this kind of dispair a kind of fairy tale must be lived so life will not seem meaningless. Shin affirms man needs the illusion of hope: "Because they are men Dispair is the disease of those weary of life, life here and now full of meaningless sufferings. We mush fight dispair, we must destroy it and not let the sickness of

dispair corrupt the life of man and reduce him to a mere scarecrow." (p. 256)

Humanism

While some authors are debating how to modify religion or accept its inconsistencies, others want to throw it out entirely. They feel it has little relevance in today's world. As mentioned in the introduction, they feel that the increase in science and technology has made unquestioning religious belief more difficult. It is difficult to believe in miracles and their scientific explanation at the same time. The absence of religion leaves a void which they suggest filling with humanism. According to their viewpoint, it would be of more benefit to concentrate on improving the lot of mankind, than worshipping some unknown being.

The irrelevance of religion in a war-torn situation is pointed out in Joseph Heller's Catch-22. Reverend A. T. Tappmann, as chaplain for the air corps unit, is the obvious representative of religion in this novel. He is presented as a very weak-willed and unassuming chaplain who tries to remain as inconspicuous as possible. His tent is placed in the woods by itself between the officer's quarters and the enlisted men's camp. Serving both groups, he clearly belongs to neither. In his isolated position, Tappmann has few demands on his services, which is fine with him. He does do his duty by visiting the men in the hospital who do not really want to see him. In doing his duty, he tries

very hard not to offend the men or make them feel uncomfortable. He offers to bring Yossarian books or magazines.

Colonel Cathcart and Colonel Korn use the chaplain for public relations stories but despise him as a man. For example, Colonel Cathcart asks Tappmann to pray before missions for a tight bombing pattern. The chaplain refuses because enlisted men are not included and athiests are not allowed to leave. He feels such specific prayers are wrong and the spirit of the whole project is objectionable. During this discussion, Tappmann's attention is drawn by bushels of plum tomatoes sitting in the room. He finally asks about them and is given one. The chaplain is also asked to write a form letter to the families of all men killed in the company. The letter is ridiculous and impersonal, but the Colonel hopes it will give them good publicity. To insure there will be dead soldiers, he volunteers his men for a dangerous assignment to Avignon.

The Colonels' hostility toward Tappmann surfaces at the officer's club. They do not want the chaplain there and yet are too afraid of Yossarian (who is with Tappmannn) to strike him and/or throw him out. Finally the Colonel seeks to discredit Tappmann with the plum tomato incident. The chaplain is accused of taking the tomato and is discredited for accepting it even if it was given to him. They also accuse him of writing letters and signing them Washington Irving. He is treated by the interrogators as a subversive individual but is finally released with no

official charges against him. The Chaplain tries to do what is right regarding the prayers and letters. He is sincere in trying to help his men spiritually and materially, but is frustrated by the total disregard for his position. His few efforts to reduce the number of missions and send men home are futile.

Tappmann has doubts himself about being a chaplain and whether there is a God. He dislikes being ostracized by the men and longs for his wife and children. He actually wonders if there is a single true faith or a life after death. There are many questions regarding Biblical history and God that he doubts and/or does not understand. He knows he is not particularly suited to his work but does not know what else to do. It bothers him that others will not treat him like a normal person rather than some kind of freak. Heller sums him up well in the statement "The Chaplain was sincerely a very helpful person who was never able to help anyone...."[1] His religion is of no benefit to these men in a war zone situation. The only hope expressed by Tappmann occurs after Orr successfully escapes to Norway. Yossarian declares he, too, will try to escape and the Chaplain declares he will persevere in his work. Both now have hope that the impossible can be done.

[1]Joseph Heller, Catch-22 (New York:Dell Publishing Co., Inc., 1955), p. 280. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

In this novel, Heller presents many horrifying stories of how men destroy each other for no real gains. Milo has the pilots bomb and strafe their own camp in payment to the Germans for some commodities. He also tries to feed the men chocolate covered cotton and removes the CO_2 cylinders from their life jackets. Everything Milo is involved in is excused because it is for the best interest of the Enterprise of which everyone is a member. McWatt's cutting Kid Sampson in two and Snowden's death in the plane are two gruesome incidents in this war novel. Yossarian reacts to all of these incidents with horror and disbelief. After Snowden dies and bleeds all over Yossarian, he refuses to wear clothes.

While in bed with Lieutenant Scheisskopf's wife, Yossarian discusses his view of God. She tells him to be thankful, but he retorts that there are more things to be miserable about. He tells her not to say anything about God's mysterious ways. "There's nothing so mysterious about it. He's not working at all. He's playing. Or else He's forgotten all about us." That's the kind of God you people talk about--a country bumpkin, a clumsy, bungling, brainless, conceited, uncouth hayseed." (p. 184) Yossarian cannot understand a God who allows such pain and suffering to exist. He calls God a bungling, incompetent being and swears that He should not get away with it. "You know, we mustn't let Him get away scot free for all the sorrow He's caused us. Someday I'm going to make Him pay. I know when.

On the Judgment Day. Yes, that's the day I'll be close enough to reach out and grab that little yokel by His neck and--." (p. 185)

Yossarian, like Heller, cannot believe in God or war. He wants to survive, but sees little purpose in life. Unlike Dunbar who prolongs life with unpleasant things, Yossarian is looking for an escape from the unpleasant things such as religion and war. When he hears that Orr has made it to Sweden, Yossarian deserts also, hoping that he, too, can make it to a peaceful country. Heller sees the world as a place with many wrongs needing correcting. Religion has not done the job. The other alternative is for men to care enough about each other so that they will seek to control the bad and work toward a better future.

Religion is also ineffective and at times destructive in Peter Matthiessen's At Play in the Fields of the Lord. Action in this novel is centered on the Hubers and Quarriers--two missionary families who have come to Brazil to save the souls of the Niarunas. Andy and Leslie Huber are young, attractive, almost "Joe College" type of people who pursue their work with enthusiasm. Leslie paints glowing pictures about the work they are doing when writing to the church back home. The Quarriers too, begin with a certain degree of enthusiasm, but it is dampened by a previous failure with the Indians of North Dakota. The goal of these missionaries is to contact the Niaruna and then try to convert them to Christianity. Leslie has been marginally

successful in a few initial efforts and they are now going to move to the jungle area where the tribe lives. Believing the Niaruna are inferior and backward, the missionaries treat them this way. They feel that theirs is the only right way to live and believe and refuse to accept native customs. Leslie states that he will convert the Niaruna, even if it kills them.

When Andy contaminates Moon and thus the tribe with the flu, Leslie tries to capitalize on this by bringing the sick to his camp. Here he hopes to convert them while healing them. If they do not come to him on his own terms, he will let them die. The Niaruna cooperate, but are bitter about the conditions laid down. This type of single-mindedness limits the success of the missionaries' work.

The nature of their converts is best illustrated by the native guide. Uyuyu originally comes to Madre de Dios to get an education and thus prevent the traders from cheating his people. He lets the priest teach him to become a good Catholic so that he can also learn to read and write. When his Catholic prayers for his people go unheeded, Uyuyu switches allegiance to the Protestant missionary, Leslie Huber.

Xantes, the padre of Madre de Dios treats this situation and others very philosophically. He cannot understand Quarrier's attitude of hate and fear toward the Catholic church. Is Uyuyu really a Protestant, Catholic, neither,

or both? "Do you think he knows the difference?"[1] Quarrier is not sure if Xante, in saying he, is referring to Uyuyu, God, or both. While Quarrier will allow no deviations from his religious dogma, Xantes adjusts himself to the facts of life. El Commandante insists that the Padre sit in on the plans to bomb the Niaruna. Moon asks him how he can sit there and listen to cold plans to massacre and not try to stop it. Xantes replies "But is he then to turn his back on the other tribes who need his help, to abandon the work that can be done, to do nothing but creep about an empty church? For that is the alternative, should one contest the word of El Commandante. And so, I must choose what seems to me the lesser of two sins, and pray for forgiveness in the eyes of the Lord." (p. 42) Matthiessen seems to be more sympathetic to this down-to-earth approach to religion Xantes exhibits rather than to the missionaries' fanaticism.

The Niaruna have their own God, Kisu, who is a very simple and nature-based god. Their tribal customs and rituals are closely linked to the jungle they must survive in. Artificial restrictions have no place in their lives. Sex and other bodily functions as well as the body itself are considered natural and beautiful; there is no shame

[1]Peter Matthiessen, At Play in the Fields of the Lord (New York:Random House, 1965), p. 28. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

involved. Moon, an avowed athiest, is attracted by this simplicity and peace and joins these people. After seeking escape in a bottle, Moon finds what he is looking for with the Niaruna.

Billy, too, finds merit in the ways of Niaruna. He learns their language and loves them freely. In turn, the Niaruna learn to love him and mourn his death from the flu. He is their only real tie to the missionaries. Martin learns from Billy's humanistic approach and sheds some of his own rigid standards. With his long-standing interest in ethnology, there is much fascinating material that can be accumulated about this tribe. From this position, he progresses to the point where he learns to love the Niaruna almost as much as does Billy. Thus, when he learns that El Commandante plans to invade and subdue the Niaruna, he tries to warn them, dying in the attempt.

Hazel responds to the jungle life with extreme regidity. Unlike her husband and son who learn the love of fellow man, Hazel knows only the dogma of organized religion. She rejects it briefly when Billy dies, but returns to it as her only haven after Martin also dies. Her understanding of religion is on a purely surface level. After her experiences in the jungle, she no longer believes in God, but exploits the death of her husband and son to gain prestige for herself. Andy, too, knows disbelief and has difficulty handling it. She "sins" in lusting for Moon and yet finds more sincerity and love in him than in Leslie.

After Martin's death, Andy finds herself searching for life's meaning. She hears the music from the Catholic church and finds some comfort in it. Inside Xantes is celebrating mass for Billy and Martin--two who learned of love for other men. Andy asks him if he truly believes and Xante responds "And...a man like myself...I need it, you see...I need it." (p. 243) Xante, like Hazel, has settled for the security religion gives him. Andy also considers propositioning Wolfe, so frustrated is she by her lack of faith. Wolfe, sensing her desperation refuses.

Matthiessen has explored several reactions toward religion. Leslie is the enthusiastic, unquestioning, rigid missionary for the Lord. He ignores anything that might shake his position. Moon and Wolfe are avowed athiests but find no comfort in their disbelief. Andy moves toward this same position after seeing the ineffectivness of Leslie and Padre Xantes. Hazel and Xantes do not believe in God but will not openly admit this, as their professed belief has become their way of life. Billy knows true love for his fellow man, forgetting the restrictions of religion. Martin and Moon move toward this position after becoming disillusioned with the world as it is.

More was accomplished in this novel by concern for others than all the religious dogma put together. Matthiessen leans toward humanism in this novel because of its nonconfining nature. However, he also sees some merit in Kisu and the religion of the Niaruna. It is a

simple and natural religion with most of its customs linked to nature. But while it serves the Niaruna well, it does not work in the civilized world of the white man.

Doubts about organized religion are also expressed by William Faulkner in Light in August. Reverend Hightower immediately comes to mind when thinking in these terms. He makes a poor first impression on his church by bragging about how he manipulated people to be sent to Jefferson. His sermons are a curious mixture of his grandfather being shot from a galloping horse and absolution and God. His wife is a mystery to the congregation. She frequently leaves on trips to purportedly visit relatives. Less and less of her is seen at the church, and the women cease visiting the parsonage. Finally she stands up in church one Sunday and begins screaming. Shortly after this she is sent to a sanitarium for treatment. When she returns to Jefferson, she plays the role of the minister's wife well for a while, and then begins disappearing on trips again. Finally she dies in a fire, found in a hotel with another man. This scandal shocks Hightower's congregation much worse than him. He still goes to the church to preach, but his parishoners get up and leave. These people must have their religion in a very traditional, rigid way. Hightower's unconventional ranting about the civil war and his grandfather in addition to his wife is just too much for his congregation. They want a spiritual leader, and he is not filling the gap. So he is asked to resign. At first

he refuses, but when they lock him out of the church, he complies.

Not only does Hightower fail his church as a spiritual leader, he also becomes a victim of their moral judgment. They run off his Negro woman cook and finally also run off his Negro man cook. With him still in the community, they are reminded of the imperfections of their religion and do not want to face this.

Later in the novel we learn of Hightower's obsession with tales his grandfather and Negro cook told him as a boy. He feels an inner hunger to go to Jefferson where his grandfather died. Together with his wife they work for this goal, throwing all integrity to the winds. We learn that his grandfather's death in a chicken house was not glorious. Then Hightower tells his wife she can never satisfy him for his only passion is tied to his family's history. His treatment drives her to seek love elsewhere and find her death doing it. Though Hightower loves the ministry he lets it take second place to his own passions regarding his family history. Therefore his ineffectiveness is understood and his shame mostly deserved. The congregation greets him with a hunger he does not bother to fill.

Hightower has a vision of a wheel going fast and smooth until he sees a halo full of peaceful faces--his wife's, townspeople's, Byron Bunch's, Lena's, and Christmas'. Christmas's face alone is not clear--it seems to merge with

another he is not sure of. Hightower thinks he is dying, but cannot pray. Then the mounted soldiers rush by in a large explosion. There is nothing left of him. Hightower's past destroys him.

Though he is no longer a minister, Byron comes often to talk with Hightower. He tries to tell Byron what is morally right and urges him to forget Lena and her problems as she is a wicked girl and Byron deserves better. When Christmas is arrested for murdering Joanna Burden, his grandparents, the Hines, learn of it and follow him to Jefferson. There Byron finds them and takes them to Hightower for help. They beg Hightower to provide an alibi for Christmas, but he refuses. Hightower does deliver a Negro baby and Lena's baby because he is needed. He means well, but has chosen to remain rigid now on religious matters.

McEachern is another uncompromising religious character in the novel. He adopts Christmas as a boy, intending to teach him to work hard and serve God. Trying to beat religion into Christmas, McEachern only gains the boy's hate. Their life together includes many small battles until Christmas finally hits him, takes his step-mother's savings, and tries to run off with a waitress. McEachern's unwavering, cold religious faith only gives him ego satisfaction and power. It does not help his wife or Christmas.

Being the victim of another religious man's anger, Christmas has known much loneliness. His Grandfather Hines

lets Christmas's mother give birth to him without the care of a doctor. When she dies after delivery; Hines does not grieve her death. He calls it God's justice. Then he takes the baby and gives it away. Christmas ends up in an orphanage where life is miserable as the other children call him "nigger." He never understands gestures of love--rejecting Mrs. McEachern's and Joanna Burden's love. Knowing more hate than love, he continually questions motives. His own grandmother finds and loves him and helps him to escape. In seeking escape he runs to Hightower, then knocks him aside and gives himself up to death.

Religion appears as a confining and unsympathetic force in this novel. Christmas meets abuse because of it and Byron receives reprobation from his friend Hightower because of it. There are many situations when human kindness can or could accomplish more. For example the persecution of Hightower after his resignation was cruel and unnecessary. Byron's concern for Lena is much more commendable.

In this novel Faulkner contrasts the hate and intolerance of religion with acts of love between men. The novel opens with Lena making her way to Jefferson from Alabama looking for her lover and the father of her expected child. She is forced to leave by a religious and indignant brother-in-law. On the road she is given a ride by Armstid who, though not approving of her past behavior, takes pity on her plight and takes her home for the night. There his wife feeds the girl and gives her the chicken money she has

hoarded.

Then Lena finds Byron in her search for Lucas and once more is provided with shelter and food. His kind attentions soon develop into an unselfish love that cause Byron to continue to provide for her and her baby. He tries to get her her husband and, when this fails, is content to travel the countryside with her.

Faulkner's novel points out to the reader the cruelties and foolishness of religion and therefore, its ineffectiveness. In this, he progresses beyond the mere ineffectiveness of religion pointed out by Heller and Matthiessen. He moves on toward a position of love and interaction between men as the only hope. Characters such as Byron Bunch and Armstid are used to illustrate this position.

Steinbeck, like the authors previously discussed, doubts religion's relevance in today's world. Grapes of Wrath tells of the plight of the Okies who are forced by circumstances to become migrant workers in California. While on the farm in Oklahoma, they still believe in God and pray for his help and guidance. Advanced technology moves them out as large machinery and companies move in.

Jim Casy, a very popular minister, gives up the ministry about the time the farmers are leaving. He states he "ain't got the call no more. Got a lot of sinful

idears--but they seem kinda sensible."[1] He and Joad reminisce about his burning bush days, when Casy held revivals and baptisms. He admits his heart is not in it anymore. Whenever he held a revival, it got his blood hot so that afterward he had to lay with a girl in the grass. Finally he realizes that the spirit he feels is love for people. "An I says, Don't you love Jesus? 'Well, I thought an' thought an' finally I says, 'No, I don't know nobody name' Jesus. I know a bunch of stories, but I only love people." (p. 24)

Casy asks to travel to California with the Joad family, hoping he can be of some help to the migrant families on the road. He first tells them he is not a preacher anymore. In fact, instead of saying grace over breakfast, he just says he is thankful for breakfast and the love of these people. Feeling religion really cannot help the migrants, Casy wants to just come along as a friend. "They gonna need help no preachin' can give 'em. Hope of heaven when their lives ain't lived. Holy sperit when their own sperit is downcast an' sad? They gonna need help. They got to live before they can afford to die." (p. 56) As they travel, Casy acts as their religious mentor saying grace and praying over Grandpa's grave. He does this even

[1]John Steinbeck, The Grapes of Wrath (New York:The Viking Press, Inc., 1966), p. 20. All subsequent quotations from the novel will refer to this edition and page numbers will be included in the text.

though he does not believe, because it gives the Joad family comfort. At this point religion serves as a form of opium. It is the only bright spot in their disrupted lives.

Traveling toward California, the Joads soon become one of many migrant families harrassed and threatened in the towns they pass through. By the time they reach California, survival is more important than religion. When Grandma dies, they do not take time for a funeral or prayer. The business of surviving is all-consuming. In the government camp the Joads are contrasted with a group of religious fanatics. The majority of the families are sharing, working, and playing together. One woman warns Rose of Sharon to be a good girl so that her baby will be born normally. She condemns the Saturday night dances and claims it caused two girls to lose their babies. God is painted as a vengeful force. "An' don' you think them sinners is puttin' nothin' over on God, neither. No, sir, He's a chalkin' 'em up sin by sin...." (p. 342) The manager interrupts this conversation and tells Rose of Sharon the woman makes people unhappy and likes to make trouble. Later Mrs. Sandry tells Rose of Sharon and Mrs. Joad that the camp is full of wicked people and wicked doings. When Mrs. Joad does not agree, she says "I can see your black soul a-burnin'. I can see that innocent child in that there girl's belly a-burnin'." (p. 354)

Mrs. Joad feels the camp is full of good people. She accuses Mrs. Sandry of trying to ruin the little pleasure they all have. This one woman and her family have caused more than their share of trouble in the camp. Steinbeck shows how fanatical religion can be used to hurt people and create dissension without helping anyone. Not only does Mrs. Sandry make everyone else unhappy, she is also miserable herself.

Steinbeck also puts an unfavorable light on Holy Roller preachers. When explaining the camp to Tom, the manager states they were having problems with these preachers who would follow the people around and take their money in collections. The older folk wanted them so the Committee decided anyone could preach in the camp, but no one could take collections. There had not been a preacher in the camp since. This episode reinforces Steinbeck's opinion that many are in the religion business for the money, as Elmer Gantry and Sharon Farrell were. Casy has no tolerance for the rigid, fanatical religion described above. In fact he has come to believe organized religion has nothing to offer the migrant worker. Uncle John thinks he is causing the family's bad luck because he sinned once. When he did not care for his sick wife, she died; and now he is trying to lose his shame by drinking. Casy comforts him by saying everyone has sins. "Sure I got sins. Ever'body got sins. A sin is somepin you ain't sure about. Them people that's sure about ever'thing ain't

got no sin--well, that kind of a son-of-a-bitch, if I was God I'd kick their ass right outa heaven!" (p. 247) Casy feels no man or religion should dictate a man's life. "On'y one thing in this worl' I'm sure of, an' that's I'm sure nobody got a right to mess with a fella's life. He got to do it all hisself. Help him, maybe, but not tell him what to do." (p. 247) Casy himself has sinned and feels he cannot preach to others. Steinbeck sees no value in religion's practice of setting up rules of behavior and rights and wrongs.

At the Hooperville Camp the workers run out of work. A deputy and contractor come in and tell the migrants to move on to Tulare. They even suggest the camp will be closed down by the health authorities. Tom and Floyd talk back to the men and are accused of being Reds. As the men leave, they arrest Floyd who hits the deputy and runs. Tom trips the deputy who then shoots and hits a woman nearby. As the deputy tries to shoot again, Casy kicks him in the neck. Casy tells Tom to hide in the willows and Al to hide in the family tent. By taking responsibility for what happened, Casy protects the Joad family and prevents Tom from being sent back to prison. Casy's unselfish act inspires Uncle John to turn over the five dollars he has been hoarding, holding out only enough to get drunk.

Steinbeck develops Casy as a Christ-figure. Several times Casy refers to going into the wilderness to think. When Tom runs into him at the Hooper Ranch, Casy is leading

a group of strikers. The preacher talks about the time he spent in jail and the men he met. He says most of them were good men who just needed something. Need makes all the trouble. Casy has tried to organize the migrants into a union. He starts one, but the vigilantes break it up. But the preacher does not give up, as he tells Tom, "'Anyways, you do what you can. An',' he says, 'the on'y thing you get to look at is that ever' time they's a little step fo'ward, she may slip back a little, but she never slips clear back. You can prove that,' he says, 'an' that makes the whole thing right. An' that means they wasn't no waste even if it seemed like they was.'" (p. 425) Casy urges Tom to go back and tell the people in the camp what is happening to the strikers. However, Tom knows all they care about is survival. They are too hungry to organize and strike. Steinbeck has developed Casy from the seducing preacher into a leader of men. What Casy is accomplishing in his efforts to organize the migrants will be of much more benefit to them than his sermons ever were.

As the deputies surround them, Casy tells them "You fellas don' know what you're doin'. You're helpin' to starve kids." (p. 426) Again just before they kill him, he says "You don' know what you're a-doin'." (p. 426) This statement is very similar to Jesus' statement at the time of his crucifixion, "Lord, forgive them for they know not what they do." Casy has become a sacrificial figure for

the migrants.

Steinbeck further develops humanism as a religion at the end of this novel. Rose of Sharon has her baby in a box car, but it is born dead. At the same time a rain has flooded the area, and the Joads are forced to flee to higher ground. Uncle John, asked to bury the dead child, instead places the box in the roaring river to float down to the city and show the people they are murderers. This action is symbolic of Moses' mother placing him in a cradle to float down the river to the Egyptians. Moses becomes a spokesman for the plight of the Jews in Egypt, as Uncle John hopes the dead baby will demonstrate the plight of the migrant workers.

When the Joads flee their flooded box car, they search out higher ground and shelter. They find an old barn and decide to stay there. Inside there is a man and his son. The father has starved himself, giving what little food he had to feed his son. The boy steals a loaf of bread to try to feed him, but the man needs milk. Rose of Sharon still has milk in her breasts and offers this to the man. At first he refuses, but she insists. "Her hand moved behind his head and supported it. Her fingers moved gently in his hair. She looked up and across the barn, and her lips came together and smiled mysteriously." (p. 502)

Again Steinbeck, ties this act of human kindness to religion. Rose of Sharon is symbolic of the Madonna feeding the Christ-child at her breast in the barn (or stable).

She is one human giving life to another human which is the basis of Steinbeck's humanism. As Casy says, "There was the hills, an' there was me, an' we wasn't separate no more. We was one thing. An' that one thing was holly." (p. 88) Steinbeck believes humanism should supplant religion in the lives of modern man.

All of the authors discussed in this section, like Steinbeck, feel that religion is not helping man the way it should. In Catch-22 it can do nothing to stop or even soothe the tragedies of war. Religion is a destructive force in At Play in the Fields of the Lord and ineffective and intolerant in Light in August. These authors agree that abstract rules made centuries ago cannot be forced on a modern world. The intolerance of religion is also chided as unnecessary. In fact religion itself is deemed unnecessary as it has accomplished little for the plight of man. Byron Bunch's and Casy's do more for the plight of man than the Reverend Hightower's or Chaplain Tappmann's.

Conclusion

The preceding discussion explores contemporary authors' difficulties in handling religion. This difficulty is based on a struggle between faith and knowledge and the apparently irreconcilable differences. The novels by Fredric and Miller point out this problem which is borne out in subsequent discussion. In A Canticle for Leibowitz, technology is held directly responsible for the destruction that has occurred, and therefore is run underground. Theron Ware discovers he cannot maintain both intellectual enlightenment and the fire of his religious faith. Placed in this dilemma, these authors look for solutions.

Several authors discussed, such as Lewis, Updike, and Styron, never find an answer. They explore all the possibilities--blind faith, opium, atheism- but all have their drawbacks. For example, Styron shows the fanaticism of Daddy Faith working for the uneducated blacks, but it holds no hope for Helen or her family. Reverend Eccles' watered-down, socialized religion does not seem to solve anything for anyone. Elmer Gantry is probably most successful with his down-to-earth, practical, and manipulative approach.

Vonnegut, Kim, and Baldwin do seem to think using religion as an opium is an answer to the dilemma. They

feel with all of the other pressures and responsibilities of life, man needs an escape. Religion has served in this capacity and they feel this should continue. Even if science has disproved or at least cast a large amount of doubt on Biblical stories, they still provide comfort if one can ignore the inconsistencies.

In the opposing camp, Heller, Steinbeck, Matthiessen and Faulkner propose substituting religious humanism for religion as dogma. Unable to accept the inconsistencies in religious dogma they still feel man needs a source of inspiration for his life. Instead of concentrating on God and a life after death, they propose concentrating on man and life today. In their novels Reverend Hightower, Andy Huber, Chaplain Tappmann, and Casy accomplish little in their ministerial capacity. However, as Casy moves from religion which he feels cannot help the migrants, toward humanism, he takes concrete steps in improving the lot of the "Okies."

Religion as an opium and humanism do have in common their concern for man. Both want to provide inspiration, comfort, and aid to the plight of unfortunate men. As these authors demonstrate, man is searching for an answer to religion's place in his life. The race toward science and technology symbolized by the space program has abated. Man now sees not only the fruits, but also the wastes of science such as pollution and depleted resources. Militant atheism, a product of this scientific era has succeeded in

separating church from school and state but has not succeeded in removing religion entirely. A backlash reminiscent of A Canticle of Leibowitz is in action. Environmentalists want to preserve the wilderness as a haven from man and science. "Jesus freaks", transcendental meditation, and other such movements are thriving as a sign that man still needs a source of inspiration. Religion has been and will remain a major force in society in spite of its failures and inadequacies because of that need for inspiration.

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